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ABSTRACT

A phonemic analysis of the Meitei language of Manipur, India, is presented. The vowel and consonant system is analyzed by the classical phonemic method, but with morpheme structure rules formulated according to the principles of generative phonology in order to generalize the pattern of various sounds and specify the allophonic distribution of vowels and consonants. Marginal and full phonemes are also distinguished, and some important phonological processes are discussed. The data were collected from approximately 40 native speakers of all ages, sexes, and professions living in the capital of Manipur. (MSE)

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# SOME ASPECTS OF MEITEI PHONOLOGY

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0.1 The authors in this paper have made an attempt to discuss and present the phonemic analysis of vowels and consonants of Meitei, or Meiteilon (Meitei+lon 'Meitei+language'), the language of Manipur. Meitei is one of the most important languages of Kuki-Chin group of Assam-Burmese branch of Tibeto-Burman family. Some important phonological processes are also discussed in the paper.

The vowel and consonant system of the language is analyzed along the lines of classical phonemic method, which gives us the facility of positing contrasting phonemes. We have, however, tried to formulate morpheme structure (MS) rules on the basis of generative phonology as this gives us an economic way of generalizing the pattern of various sounds. This also helps us in specifying the allophonic distribution of vowels and consonants of the language. Along with these two principles, we have

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tried to distinguish between 'marginal' and 'full' phonemes as suggested by J. Crothers (1978):

> "The former (marginal) including all phonemes with a severe distributional restrictions in terms of phonological environment, or morphological or lexical function. Marginal phonemes may include phonemes in unassimilated loans, phonemes that occur in limited contexts as the result of morphophonemic fusion, sounds that generally have non-contrastive distribution but, due to a sound change or some special morphological pattern (e.g. reduplication), occur contrastively in a limited environment."
>
> (p.102)

## 1. PHONEMIC INVENTORY:

Meitei has the following segmental and suprasegmental phonemes:

### 1.1. Segmental Phonemes

#### 1.1.1. Consonants

| | | Bilabial | Dental | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STOP | Vl. Un Asp. | p | t | | c | k | |
| | Asp. | $p^h$ | $t^h$ | | | $k^h$ | |
| | Vd. | b($b^h$)* | d($d^h$)* | | j($j^h$)* | g($g^h$)* | |
| NASAL | | m | n | | | n | |
| LATERAL | | | | l | | | |
| ROLLED | | | | r | | | |
| FRICATIVE | Vl. | | | s | | | h |
| | Vd. | | | | | | |
| SEMI-VOWELS | | w | | | y | | |

Fig: 1

*( ) parenthesis represent marginal phonemes

There is a set of twenty distinctive consonantal phonemes in Meitei.

1.1.2. Vowels:

There are six distinctive vocalic phonemes in Meitei: /i u e o ə a/.

| | FRONT | | CENTRAL | | BACK | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | UR | R | UR | R | UR | R |
| HIGH | i | | | | | u |
| HIGHER MID | e | | | | | o |
| MEAN MID | | | ə | | | |
| LOW | | | | | a | |

Fig: 2

1.2. Supra-Segmental Phonemes:

The supra-segmental phonemes in Meitei are two tones. Length is not phonemic in this language.

| HIGH | LOW |
|---|---|
| / | \ |

Fig: 3

1.3 Contrasting Pairs:

The following examples exhibit contrast in all positions.

1.3.1. Vowels:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /i/ /e/ | /ci/ | 'heap' |
| | /ce/ | 'paper' |
| | /ciŋ/ | 'hill, mountain' |
| | /ceŋ/ | 'rice' |
| /ə/ /a/ | /ləŋ/ | 'thread' |
| | /laŋ/ | 'net' |
| | /thəbək/ | 'work, job' |
| | /thəbak/ | 'breast' |
| /u/ /o/ | /nuŋ/ | 'stone' |
| | /noŋ/ | 'rain' |
| | /ut/ | 'ashes' |
| | /ot/ | 'block' |
| | /ubə/ | 'to see, to look' |
| | /obə/ | 'to vomit' |
| /a/ /o/ | /pat/ | 'lake' |
| | /pot/ | 'thing' |
| | /mərak/ | 'breadth' |
| | /mərok/ | 'scurf' |
| | /sa/ | 'animal' |
| | /so/ | 'key' |

1.3.2. Consonants:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /p/ /ph/ | /pabə/ | 'father' |
| | /phabə/ | 'to catch' |
| | /pi/ | 'fear' |
| | /phi/ | 'cloth' |
| | /əpəŋba/ | 'blunt' |
| | /əphəŋba/ | 'received, gathered' |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /t/ /th/ | /ta/ | 'spear' |
| | /tha/ | 'moon, month' |
| | /məta/ | 'friend (female)' |
| | /mətha/ | 'thickness' |
| | /tu/ | 'fur, bristle' |
| | /thu/ | 'vagina' |
| /t/ /d/ | /nətu/ | 'your fur or bristle' |
| | /nədu/ | 'your brother (when addressee is a female)' |
| | /mətu/ | 'his wife', 'his or her bristle' |
| | /mədu/ | 'that' |
| | /ta/ | 'spear' |
| | /da/ | 'at, in' |
| | /taton/ | 'youngest of the elder brothers' |
| | /tadon/ | 'tip or apex of a spear' |
| /p / /b/ | /məpok/ | '(his or her) birth' |
| | /məbok/ | 'grandmother' |
| | /pot/ | 'thing' |
| | /bot/ | 'banyan' |
| | /yupi/ | 'nail' |
| | /yubi/ | 'coconut' |
| | /khəwpomba/ | 'mumps' |
| | /khəwbomba/ | 'a kind of knife' |
| /k//g/ | /kun/ | 'twenty' |
| | /gun/ | 'quality' |
| | /ləga/ | 'bet' |
| | /ləka/ | 'heart' |
| | /hikok/ | 'front part of the boat' |
| | /higok/ | 'blue' |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /c/ /j/ | /kaci/ | 'crook' |
| | /kaji/ | 'a Mohammadan official' |
| | /licəy/ | 'stick' |
| | /lijəy/ | 'narrate' |
| | /cagə/ | 'income' |
| | /jagə/ | 'place' |
| | /layci/ | 'corner, south-west' |
| | /layji/ | 'north-west direction' |
| /k/ /kh/ | /məka/ | 'his or her concern' |
| | /məkha/ | 'south' |
| | /kəkpa/ | 'to cut' |
| | /khəkpa/ | 'to stop, to cease' |
| | /məku/ | 'owl' |
| | /məkhu/ | 'his or her knee' |
| | /ka/ | 'room' |
| | /kha/ | 'south' |
| /l/ /n/ | /ləŋ/ | 'thread' |
| | /nəŋ/ | 'you' , 'thou' |
| | /la/ | 'leaf of plantain tree' |
| | /na/ | 'ear' |
| | /onanbə/ | 'something slippery' |
| | /olanbə/ | 'something wrong' |
| /t/ /s/ | /təm/ | 'valley' |
| | /səm/ | 'hair' |
| | /ta/ | 'spear' |
| | /sa/ | 'animal' |
| | /əsaŋbə/ | 'long' |
| | /ətaŋbə/ | 'costly, precious' |
| | /məta/ | 'friend (female)' |
| | /məsa/ | 'body' |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /w/ /y/ | /pəwa/ | 'a quarter ( ¼)', 'one fourth' |
| | /pəya/ | 'twig of bamboo' |
| | /wa/ | 'bamboo' |
| | /ya/ | 'tooth' |
| | /wabə/ | 'to suffer' |
| | /yabə/ | 'to approve, to agree' |
| /w/ /b/ | /kheba/ | 'to amuse' |
| | /khewa/ | 'ferry' |
| | /məwuŋ/ | 'manner of circling' |
| | /məbuŋ/ | 'her (elder) brother' |
| | /yabə/ | 'to approve, to agree' |
| | /yawə/ | 'voice' |
| /l/ /r/ | /har/ | 'manure' |
| | /hal/ | 'iron placed round the wheel of a cart' |
| | /koli/ | 'dwarf' |
| | /kori/ | 'copper' |
| | /mela/ | 'fair' |
| | /mera/ | 'name of a month' |
| | /urum/ | 'shade' |
| | /ulum/ | 'pendulum' |
| | /khulen/ | 'old village' |
| | /khuren/ | 'a kind of ring' |
| /m/ /n/ | /ləm/ | 'land', 'territory' |
| | /lən/ | 'wealth' |
| | /məhak/ | 'he or she' |
| | /nəhak/ | 'you' |
| | /əpùmba/ | 'rotten' |
| | /əpùnba/ | 'union, unity' |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /n/ /ŋ/ | /məna/ | 'leaf' |
| | /məŋa/ | 'five' |
| | /na/ | 'ear' |
| | /ŋa/ | 'fish' |
| | /lən/ | 'wealth' |
| | /ləŋ/ | 'thread' |

2. ALLOPHONIC DISTRIBUTION:

2.1.1. Vowels:

The MS rules for vowels can be formulated as given below. It is to be noted that all [+tense] vowels such as /i,e,u,o/ have their lax counterparts as allophones. Consider:

MS-1

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{high} \\ +\text{tense} \end{bmatrix} \overset{V}{\longrightarrow} [-\text{tense}] \quad / \left\{ \begin{matrix} C __ C \\ \# __ C \end{matrix} \right\}$$

That is, /i, u/ become [I,U] in between two consonants or initially in a word if followed by a consonant. For example:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [tIn'] | 'saliva' | | [məci] | 'horn' |
| [Ipa] | 'my father' | but | [əni] | 'two' |
| [IsIŋ'] | 'water' | | [i] | 'blood' |
| | | | [i-bə] | 'to be ill' |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ʊtʼ] | 'ashes' | [cu] | 'sugarcane' |
| [nʊŋʲ] | 'stone' - but | [maku] | 'owl' |
| [ʊpu] | 'box' | [phu+bə] | 'beat' |
| | | [əmu+bə] | 'black' |

MS-2

$$\begin{bmatrix} V \\ -\text{high} \\ -\text{low} \\ -\text{back} \\ +\text{tense} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow [-\text{tense}] \;/\; C \text{ — } C \; (\neq C \; {}^{V}_{+low}) \; \alpha \begin{Bmatrix} +\text{low} \\ \# \end{Bmatrix}$$

That is, higher mid front vowel /e/ is realized as [ɛ] word finally in between two consonants; or between two consonants if the following consonant is itself followed by a low vowel such as /a/; or before a morpheme final consonant which is followed by another consonant and a low vowel. Consider:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [ucɛkʲ] | 'bird' | | [ce] | 'paper' |
| [mɛra] | 'name of a month' | but | [ɟce] | 'sister' |
| [kɛn - ba] | 'fall + infinitive | | [cen-ba] | 'flow/run + infinitive' |

MS-3

$$\begin{bmatrix} V \\ -\text{high} \\ -\text{low} \\ +\text{back} \\ +\text{tense} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow [-\text{tense}] \;/\; \begin{Bmatrix} C \text{ — } C \\ \# \text{ — } C \end{Bmatrix}$$

That is, higher mid back vowel /o/ is laxed to [ɔ] inter-consonantally and word initially. For example:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| [nɔŋ'] | 'rain' | | [cəgo] | 'ball or hoop' |
| [ɔk'] | 'pig' | but | [thəro] | 'lily' |

Many speakers were noted to freely vary ɔ and o medially and initially in a word.

2.1.2. In other words, there are 6 distinctive vowels in the underlying level. At the phonetic representation the number increases to 10. On the basis of the typology and universals of vowel systems suggested by Crothers, Meitei is a typical example of 6 vowel system of having 5 peripheral vowels and one interior vowel. See fig:4.

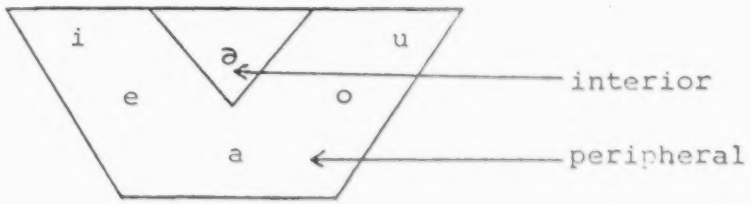


Fig: 4

2.2. Distribution of Phonemes:

2.2.1. Vowels:

All the vowels except /e/ occur initially. All other vowels occur medially and finally.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| /i/ | /ipak/ | 'vast sheet of water' |
| | /miŋ/ | 'name' |
| | /ləmbi/ | 'street, way, passage' |
| /e/ | /ten/ | 'arrow' |
| | /kege/ | 'castor' |
| /u/ | /uku/ | 'canal' |
| | /khunba/ | 'to gather' |
| | /cəru/ | 'straw' |
| /o/ | /ok/ | 'pig' |
| | /colom/ | 'movement made by drummer and singer' |
| | /cəgo/ | 'ball' or 'hoop' |
| /ə/ | /əbok/ | 'grandmother' |
| | /məŋ/ | 'dream', 'graveyard' |
| | /khərə/ | 'few, some' |
| /a/ | /adə/ | 'there, at some distance' |
| | /thanjə/ | 'Saturday' |
| | /tənja/ | 'chance, opportunity' |

2.2.2. A few instances of <u>vowel clusters</u> are found. These may be initial or medial.

| | |
|---|---|
| /əibə/ | 'something in the written form' |
| /əubə/ | 'eyewitness' |
| /əobə/ | 'vomit (n)' |
| /yaonbə/ | 'to change sides' |
| /yaum/ | 'mouthful' |
| /məruoybə/ | 'important' |
| /məin/ | 'the way someone pushes something in' |
| /məun/ | 'skin' |
| /məon/ | 'mode of measure' |
| /ain/ | 'law' |

2.2.3. Consonants:

All stop consonants of Meitei have one and only one allophone. Free variation between [s] ~ [š] was noticed. Similarly, for some speakers, free variation occurs between [c], [č] and [s]. Meitei final voiceless consonants are always unreleased, a feature shared by almost all the languages of this family. Hence, no distinction can be envisaged between voiced and voiceless stops word finally. Consonants [l] and [n] freely vary in syllable final position except in cases where final /l/or /n/ itself is followed by another /l/ or/n/ respectively in the following syllable. In other words, in the latter cases only geminate will emerge. See section 3.1, MS Rule 2. Consider:

/lal/ ~ /lan/ 'war'
/khul/ ~ /khun/ 'village'

but

/pul~pun + li/ ⟶ /pulli/ 'bind + continuative'

Not all the consonants occur in all the positions. Only /p t k m n ŋ l r/ occur finally, though the frequency of occurrence of /r/ in final position is very low. /b/ and /g/ occur finally in borrowed words, varying sometimes freely with /p/ /k/ respectively. All the voiceless

consonants occur in word initial position, the occurrence of /b $b^h$ d $d^h$ j $j^h$ g $g^h$ r/ in this position mostly being restricted to borrowed words. All the consonants occur word medially.

Voiced unaspirated stops are always released. In final position the alveloar lateral /l/ freely varies with the dental nasal /n/. Consider the following table showing the distributional pattern.

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| /p/ | /pabə/ 'father' | /əpáŋbə/ 'helped (adj.)' | /nəp/ 'mucus' |
| /t/ | /tábə/ 'to hear' | /kortan/ 'cymbal' | /ipòt/ 'my belongings' |
| /c/ | /cùbá/ 'cheek' | /məcɛt/ 'price, scrap' | X |
| /k/ | /kábà/ 'burnt' | /ləka/ 'heart' | /mərek/ 'fat' (oily) |
| /ph/ | /phábà/ 'to catch' | /khonphəm/ 'utterance' | X |
| /th/ | /thabə/ 'fat' | /sənthi/ 'cow dung' | X |
| /kh/ | /khábà/ 'bitter' | /məkhu/ 'his or her knee' | X |

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| /s/ | /sábà/ 'hot' | /məsi/ 'this' | X |
| /h/ | /húbà/ 'to steal' | /əhum/ 'three' | X |
| /m/ | /misək/ 'person' | /mompak/ 'mattress' | /mirem/ 'worthless fellow' |
| /n/ | /nàbá/ 'sick' | /lənba/ 'not so thick' | /tən/ 'bread' |
| /ŋ/ | /ŋabə/ 'to lean, to recline' | /kəŋla/ 'capital' | /əŋaŋ/ 'child' |
| /l/ | /lúbə/ 'clean, neat' | /kolu/ 'mould' | /thəmbal/ 'lotus' |
| /w/ | /wabə/ 'to suffer, to be tired' | /kwa/ 'betel nut' | /layphəw/ 'prophecy' |
| /y/ | /yabə/ 'to agree' | /məyam/ 'many' | /iroy/ 'buffalo' |
| /j/ | /jəgoy/ 'dance' | /ləmjen/ 'race' | X |
| /b/ | /bor/ 'bridegroom' | /ləmbal/ 'roadside' | /gulab/ 'rose' |
| /d/ | /dol/ 'political party' | /ləmdop/ 'zone' | X |
| /g/ | /gari/ 'motor' | /ugon/ 'clump' | /jug/ 'age' |
| /r/ | /ruman/ 'handkerchief' | /cərəm/ 'throat' | /kəmpor/ 'blanket' |

| | Initial | Medial | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| Borrowed voiced aspirated consonants: | | | |
| /$b^h$/ | /bhut/ 'ghost' | /səbha/ 'meeting' | X |
| /$j^h$/ | /jhut/ 'cheat' | X | X |
| /$d^h$/ | /dhora/ 'wheel', 'axle' | /gədha/ 'donkey' | X |
| /$g^h$/ | /ghuti/ 'a kite' | /jiŋgha/ 'tin roof' | X |

Fig: 5

2.3 Marginal Phonemes:

Phonemes listed in Fig.1 in parentheses are marginal ones as they mainly occur in borrowed words. Except the following four words voiced aspirated stops were not found in any inherited Meitei vocabulary.

| | |
|---|---|
| [ləʊb$^h$əmˈ] | 'to grasp', 'to understand' |
| [jIŋg$^h$a] | 'roof made of 'tin'' |
| [tad$^h$ənˈ] | 'elder brother' |
| [laʊd$^h$i] | 'doll' |

Some of the common borrowed words consisting voiced aspirates are given below. Though by now these sounds do form the regular phonetic habit of the Meitei speakers, we would still consider them as marginal phonemes because of their existence in a very limited borrowed vocabulary.

| | |
|---|---|
| [gʰəri] | 'watch' |
| [gʰi] | 'ghee' |
| [gʰʊs] | 'bribe' |
| [jʰʊli] | 'a bag, wallet' |
| [dʰrʊbɜ] | 'pole star' |
| [dhobi~dʰʊbi] | 'washerman' |
| [gədʰa] | 'donkey' |
| [bʰalo] | 'bravo, hurrah' |
| [bʰʊt'] | 'ghost' |
| [bʰara] | 'fare' |
| [jhal'~ jhan'] | 'a kind of musical instrument' |
| [gʰot'] | 'earthern pitcher' |
| [dʰora] | 'wheel' |
| [dʰʊp'] | 'incense stick' |
| [gʰʊti] | 'a kite' |

## 2.4 Dipthongs:

In Meitei there occur some combinations of vowels and semi-vowels, which are phonetically realized as dipthongs. The semi-vowels in these combinations are glides. Two vowels form a dipthong comprising one peak in which one of the vowels becomes non-syllabic and consonantal. There are six such combinations:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| [ə̯i]/əy/ | [lə̯i] | 'flower, tongue' |
| [a̯I] /ay/ | [Ira̯I] | 'friday' |
| [ə̯u] /əw/ | [lə́u̯bə] | 'to take' |
| [a̯ʊ] / aw/ | [kà̯ʊbə] | 'to forget' |
| [o̯I] /oy/ | [nó̯Iba] | 'fat' |
| [u̯i]/uy/ | [ù̯ibə] | 'to feel sleepy' |

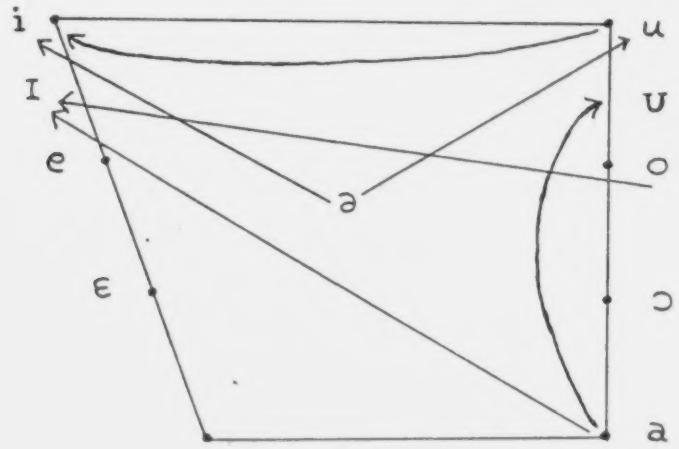


Fig: 6

## 2.5 Clusters:

Meithei is very rich in consonant clusters. Various combinatory possibilities also exist. Maximum number of three consonants are allowed in a word. Two consonant clusters occur in the initial and the medial position while three consonant clusters occur only medially. No consonant cluster is allowed word finally. We would not discuss the clusteration processes in detail here. (See Abbi & Mishra (1984) forthcoming).

## 3.1 SOME PHONOLOGICAL PROCESSES

1. TRILLATION

$$[+\text{lateral}] \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix}-\text{lateral}\\+\text{coronal}\end{bmatrix} \;/\; v \neq __ \; v$$

e.g.

| | |
|---|---|
| [əhum+lək] | 'three times' |
| [məri+rək] | 'two times' |
| /pul+lu/ | 'bind+command' |
| /pi+ru/ | 'give+command' |

2. GEMINATION

$$\begin{Bmatrix}+\text{lateral}\\+\text{nasal}\end{Bmatrix} \longrightarrow \begin{Bmatrix}\alpha\ \text{lateral}\\ \beta\ \text{nasal}\end{Bmatrix} \;/\; __ \neq \begin{Bmatrix}\alpha\text{lateral}\\ \beta\text{nasal}\end{Bmatrix}$$

/lo]- ~ lon + nə + ba/ > [lon-nə-ba] 'something for boiling'

3. DEHOMOGENIZATION:

$$\begin{bmatrix}+\text{low}\\+\text{back}\end{bmatrix}_{V} \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix}-\text{low}\\-\text{back}\end{bmatrix} \;/\; \begin{bmatrix}+\text{low}\\+\text{back}\end{bmatrix}_{V} \neq C \;__$$

i.e., a > ə if it is preceded by /a/ in the previous syllable across a morpheme boundary. For instance:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| [cà + ba] | > [cà + bə] | 'eat + infinitive' |
| [kà + ba] | > [kà + bə] | 'attend + infinitive' |
| but [cət + pa] | | 'go + infinitive' |

4. GLOTTALIZATION:

$$\begin{bmatrix}-\text{anterior}\\-\text{coronal}\\-\text{voice}\\-\text{continuant}\\-\text{release}\\+\text{back}\end{bmatrix}_{C} \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix}-\text{consonantal}\\-\text{continuant}\end{bmatrix} \;/\; V \;__\; \neq V$$

For example:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| [lek' + u] | > [le?u] | 'lick+command' |
| [tak' + i] | > [ta?i] | 'teach+continuative' |
| [lak' + o] | > [la?o] | 'come+imperative' |
| [sək' + o] | > [sə?o] | 'sing+imperative' |

5. GLIDE INSERTION:

$$\emptyset \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix} -\text{vocalic} \\ -\text{consonantal} \\ +\text{high} \\ -\text{back} \end{bmatrix} \Big/ \begin{bmatrix} V \\ +\text{high} \\ -\text{back} \end{bmatrix} __ \begin{bmatrix} V \\ +\text{back} \\ +\text{round} \\ -\text{low} \end{bmatrix}$$

Consider:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| [li + u] | > [liyu] | 'narrate + imperative (command)' |
| [li + o] | > [liyo] | 'narrate + simple imperative' |
| [pi + u] | > [piyu] | 'give + command' |

6. VOICING:

Meitei offers a large variety of suffixes, all having two variants, with initial voiced and voiceless consonants depending upon the voicing nature of the final segment of the root morpheme they are attached to.

$$[+\text{consonantal}] \longrightarrow [\alpha \text{ voice}] \Big/ [\alpha \text{ voice}] \neq __ V$$

For example:

| | |
|---|---|
| /tak + ke/ | 'will teach' |
| /pi + ge/ | 'will give' |
| /ok + pu/ | 'to pig'(acc.) |
| /naŋ + bu/ | 'to you' |
| /nəm + də/ | 'on the back' |

| | |
|---|---|
| /ut + tə/ | 'on the ashes' |
| /cət + te/ | 'not going' |
| /cà + de/ | 'not eating' |
| /cət + pa/ | 'to go' |
| /khəŋ + ba/ | 'to know' |

7. ELISION:

Elision is common in case of demonstrative pronouns.

The initial vowel of the pronoun is dropped.

$$V \longrightarrow \emptyset \;/\; X \neq -C$$

Where X stands for any segment. Consider:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| /məthol + əsi/ | > | /məthɔlsi/ | 'this storey' |
| /khut + əsi/ | > | /khutsi/ | 'this hand' |
| /nupi + əsi/ | > | /nupisi/ | 'this woman' |

8. CLUSTERIZATION:

(a) by vowel loss:

$$V \longrightarrow \emptyset \;/\; t - r$$

(b) by syllable loss:

$$[+\text{nasal}]\,V \longrightarrow \emptyset \;/\; \ddagger - [+\text{nasal}]$$

For instance:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| /ca + təruk/ | > | /ca +truk/ | 'hundred-six i.e. six hundred' |
| /ca + təret/ | > | /ca + tret/ | 'hundred-seven, i.e. seven hundred' |
| /ciŋ + mənuŋ -da/ | > | /ciŋnuŋda/ | 'inside the hill/mountain' |
| /ka + mənuŋ -da/ | > | /kanuŋda/ | 'in the room' |

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*NOTE:

The data for this paper was collected from spoken language of approximately forty native speakers of all ages, sex, and professions living in Imphal, the capital of Manipur, India. Various kinds of methods such as interviews, filling the questionnaire, recording the narrations, songs, dialogues, etc. were used.

We are thankful to all our Meitei informants for patiently bearing with us.

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